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# SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT

IN FAVOR OF

## WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP

FROM

CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES  
TOLERATING SLAVEHOLDING AMONG THEM.

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OF BRADFORD, VERMONT.

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## TO THE PUBLIC.

A SERIOUS study of the question which stands at the head of the following Argument was undertaken, nearly a year since, at the earnest request of a highly esteemed friend, who has for years been ably advocating the cause of truth and justice in his weekly journal. The same subject, shortly after, was assigned me by the ministerial Association to which I belong; and the entire article has been, at different times, submitted to their hearing and critical remarks. The Argument is now published under an impression that something of the kind is needed; and with the hope that the views here presented may lead to such further consideration of the great question discussed, as shall terminate in such action as truth, righteousness, and the honor of religion shall demand—especially of those Ecclesiastical Bodies which have justly condemned slaveholding as a great sin against both God and man, but have never yet withdrawn fellowship either from the corresponding bodies which give countenance to it, or from such ministers and church members as are known to be directly engaged in it.

THE AUTHOR.

BRADFORD, VT., MARCH 1, 1848.

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# A SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT

IN FAVOR OF

WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP FROM ALL SLAVEHOLDING  
CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES.

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HAVE WE SCRIPTURAL WARRANT FOR WITHHOLDING FELLOWSHIP FROM CHURCHES, OR OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES, ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR TOLERATION OF SLAVEHOLDING BY THEIR MEMBERS OR CONSTITUENTS?

WHEN I say have *we* any such warrant, I mean, we ministers, churches, and other ecclesiastical bodies, who believe slaveholding to be wrong, and wish to govern our conduct towards those who are in any way implicated in it, by the principles of the gospel. The question now proposed has, for years, painfully occupied the thoughts of many of the professed followers of Christ, and, beyond doubt, must, before long, be solemnly decided by all ecclesiastical bodies opposed to slavery. It is a great question, touching the most sacred interests not only of millions now living, but of their posterity in coming ages—a question involving deeply the honor of God, and the prosperity of his kingdom; a question which ought to be considered most seriously and candidly; with prayer, and in the fear of God, that it may be settled in accordance with the unchanging principles of eternal truth and rectitude. Such an investigation and settlement of the matter every unprejudiced Christian must sincerely desire. We need such light on the subject that the whole Christian community who are opposed to slaveholding may act with unanimity; rightly and firmly. If what I may suggest should lead others to do the subject better justice, I shall be gratified. I wish to be identified only with the cause of truth and righteousness; and to rejoice always in its prosperity, by whomsoever advocated.

I speak of slaveholding as commonly practiced; as constituted and supported by the laws of the slave States of our Union; and not of special or supposed cases, where the spirit of slaveholding is wanting, and the thing has only a nominal existence. The general system is not to be understood or judged of by

such exceptions ; but must be viewed as it really is, and be treated according to its ordinary character. Thus considered, slaveholding is by many believed to be directly contrary to the gospel ; so flagrantly contrary to its spirit and fundamental principles, as exhibited by Christ and his apostles, that those who, with the gospel in their hands, believe the practice to be right, and attempt to justify themselves in it by divine authority, are criminally blind, and before God deeply guilty, though in different degrees.

The question in regard to withholding fellowship from churches and other ecclesiastical bodies which practise or tolerate such slaveholding, is not whether we ought to declare all such to be in our opinion wholly destitute of the spirit of Christ, and fit to be ranked only with the ungodly ; but is this, whether such slaveholders and the churches or other ecclesiastical bodies tolerating them, have not taken such ground and placed themselves in such an attitude, that we ought, out of regard to the honor of the gospel and the religion which we profess, to withdraw fellowship from them ? Does not their connexion with slaveholding constitute a sufficient ground for withholding from them those tokens of approbation and fellowship which are common among Christians who harmonize with each other ? Shall we receive slaveholding ministers into our pulpits, or slaveholding individuals into our churches, or honor letters of recommendation from churches tolerating slavery, or give our members letters of recommendation to unite with them ? Or, more especially, shall our public ecclesiastical bodies receive delegates from like bodies tolerating slavery, and send delegates to them in return, with a view to keep up a brotherly intercourse with them ; while our delegates are not permitted to remonstrate with them against this crying evil ? Shall we do these things as heretofore ? or, after due attempts to remonstrate, wholly withdraw from those who persist in these practices, and treat them essentially as we do other professed ministers and churches among whom there may be more or less pious people, but with whom, on account of their errors and unchristian practices, we can have no public fellowship ? My own mind has been irresistibly led to a conclusion, which seems to me both rational and scriptural, by the following considerations :

I. Opinions or practices flagrantly contrary to the gospel, and pertinaciously maintained, constitute a sufficient cause, according to the scriptures, for withholding Christian fellowship from those who maintain them, and from the Churches or other ecclesiastical bodies which tolerate them.



This has been the general understanding in the Church from the beginning of the Christian dispensation. Let the matter be fairly considered, and we must be convinced that such has been and still is the general rule. Even in the days of the apostles, great errors and sins appeared in the Church, and subjected both those who were immediately guilty of them, and those who tolerated them, to the censure of the faithful. Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (iii. 6), says, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received from us."

Again, in the same chapter, he says, "We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "I have written unto you not to keep company if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat." They were not allowed to give the least seeming countenance to any of these unholy practices; but must withdraw, wholly, from those who persisted in them. Writing to Titus, he says, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth; being condemned of himself." In the Apocalypse our Lord highly commends the church in Ephesus because they hated the deeds of the Nicholaitanes, a licentious sect, whose deeds he also hated; and reproves the church in Pergamos because they tolerated them that held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Their faith and practice in this matter were so contrary to the gospel and dishonorable to religion, that the church were bound to exclude them, or withdraw from them. From these and similar scriptures it is obvious that every Christian church is bound to withhold fellowship from all other professed Christians, whether among themselves or organized into other churches, who hold opinions, or allow themselves in practices, flagrantly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and the laws of his kingdom.

That such has been the understanding of Christian people of nearly all denominations, in all ages, cannot be denied. All the protestant churches have acted on this principle in coming out

from the Church of Rome, and refusing to have fellowship with her, on account of the dogmas held by that Church respecting the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope ; the celibacy of the clergy ; their power to forgive sins and to pray souls out of purgatory ; the worship of saints and images ; transubstantiation ; withholding the Scriptures from the common people ; in short, their utter corruption of the Christian faith ; and their cruel, persecuting spirit and practices. Even different sections of the Protestant Church have deemed it their duty to withhold fellowship from others. Episcopalians maintain that their ministers only among Protestants, have been duly ordained ; and that other professed ministers are so but in name, and have no authority from Christ to preach his gospel, or administer its ordinances ; that other churches have not been duly constituted, and ought not to be recognised as standing on equal ground with themselves. The Baptists, many of them, reject the Episcopalians, and all other ministers and churches who do not practice, exclusively, what they consider the only true mode of baptism. The Reformed Presbyterians withhold fellowship both from Episcopalians and Baptists, and other sects generally, because they are accustomed to use hymns of mere human composition instead of the old Scotch version of the Psalms ; support civil governments which are neither founded nor administered on Christian principles ; and in various other points have deviated, in their view, from the path of rectitude. The great body of the churches called evangelical, or orthodox, refuse to hold fellowship with Unitarians and Universalists, because the former deny the supreme divinity of Christ and various other doctrines held to be fundamental ; and the latter maintain that all will finally be gathered into the kingdom of God, however they live or die. Various sects, in different ages, have been rejected by all the rest of the Christian world, on account of their heresies and immoral practices. Now, though some of the causes of separation above enumerated are, doubtless, insufficient, yet the fact is obvious, that the great body of professed Christians have always believed that there may be sufficient and urgent causes for withholding fellowship from both individuals and churches, claiming, as strongly as themselves, to be the followers of Christ.

Are there not causes of disunion which must be admitted by Christian people generally, to be valid and imperious ? Protestant churches universally believe that the reformers and their adherents did right to come out from the Church of Rome, on account of its incurable and intolerable corruptions ; and that as these corruptions still exist, the separation ought still to be maintained. Should any church or denomination maintain that

the Scriptures were not given by inspiration, and constitute no safe rule for human faith and practice; or that the commandments of the decalogue are no longer binding; or that Christ never laid down his life as an atoning sacrifice; or that there will never be any resurrection of the dead, or future state of retribution; would not such great and dangerous errors be considered by Christian people, generally, sufficient cause for withdrawing fellowship from their holders, however amiable or worthy they might in other respects appear? Or suppose a church should hold a creed, in the main correct, but should habitually desecrate the Sabbath by making it a day of amusement and pleasure; or should generally allow themselves to indulge in the intemperate use of intoxicating liquors; or to practice polygamy; or should they engage generally and openly in the foreign slave trade; or, in short, do, habitually, anything else manifestly contrary to the gospel, and dishonorable to the Christian name, and suited to bring scandal on religion;—would not such practices, any one of them, be generally considered sufficient cause for withholding fellowship from the doers of such things? Other churches might deem it their duty to expostulate, but if that proved unavailing, they would feel constrained by the laws of Christ, and a regard to his honor, *not to company*, as the apostle speaks, with such; no not even to eat, at the sacramental table, with them. There are surely bounds beyond which Christian fellowship cannot, consistently with the gospel, be extended. This all must allow. And these bounds are, as I have stated, errors and practices notoriously contrary to the gospel, and suited to bring Christianity, in the eyes of the world, into disgrace. Have we not proceeded over firm ground thus far?

I proceed to show,

II. That slaveholding is manifestly contrary to the gospel; and, when practiced, vindicated, or tolerated by professed Christians, most injurious to the honor and prosperity of the Christian religion.

I speak, as I said in the beginning, of ordinary slaveholding; of such slaveholding as the law makers of the slave States have by their enactments, ordained and sanctioned. There is in fact no other in our country. Wherever slavery exists in the church, it is there not by ecclesiastical, but civil authority. The State creates and protects the institution; while the church only adopts and uses it, and in that way sanctions it.

Now it is well known that the laws regard slaves not as men, but things; as mere goods and chattels, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatever; entirely in the hands and subject



to the wills of the masters to whom they belong. The body, the mind, the time, the earnings of the slave, from the moment of his birth to that of his death, are entirely subject to the dictation and disposal of the master. The slave has absolutely nothing which he can, by law, hold as his own. Even his wife and children may, at any time, be taken from him, and sold, either privately or at public auction. The female slave has, in respect to chastity, no legal protection. Her master, however libidinous or unprincipled, may use or dispose of her as he pleases. The children she bears and fondly cherishes are in no higher sense hers, than her offspring would be were she not a human being. Nor is it, in law, of any consequence who is their father. They must follow the condition of their mother. They belong to her master, who holds them as articles of property, in the same sense and way as he does the increase of his flocks and herds; and he calculates to make gain, either by working or selling them, as may best suit his advantage. As it regards crimes and penalties, the laws are altogether more strict and sanguinary in reference to the colored than they are towards the white population. Many of the same crimes which would subject a white man only to a brief imprisonment, doom the colored man to the punishment of death. And while the laws are thus unequally and unjustly severe, no slave, however veracious, is allowed to appear in any court of justice to testify against a white man, however atrocious may have been his conduct. This cruel system goes farther, and lays its deadly grasp on the very souls of its victims. It subjects all the religious privileges of the slave to the absolute will of the master, whether he be protestant, papist, or infidel. It does more; it prohibits the master from teaching his slave to read, to read even the Word of God, and thus cuts off the unfortunate creature from one of the greatest privileges which God has ever bestowed on man. It aims to keep the mind in abject ignorance and degradation; lest the enslaved should grow dissatisfied, and claim the inalienable rights of humanity. In several of the States not only slaves, but all colored people, however good may be their character, are prohibited, under heavy penalties, from the privilege of being taught to read and write. And to these laws professed Christians generally succumb, even while engaged in sending the gospel to remote heathen nations! These laws, severe and oppressive as they are, are thought, even by the church, to be required by the necessity of the case; and we hear not of their making any applications to government for their repeal. Indeed, church members have all along, without doubt, constituted an influential part of the legislatures which have made and supported these laws. In the church, what is

called *marriage*, among slaves, is a mere matter of policy and convenience ; and is not understood to be sanctioned by any law, human or divine. The master may separate the wife from the husband, or the husband from the wife, and require them to form new connexions, at his pleasure. In the church, the pious slave who sits at the same table of the Lord with his master, is still held as the property of that master ; and liable to be sold by him, or to be seized for his debts, and to be disposed of at auction, like any other merchantable commodity. Humane masters may soften the hardships of slavery, and render the yoke less intolerable than it generally is ; but the nature of the institution, and its essential injustice, remain, even in their hands, the same—men are despoiled of their most sacred rights, both as men and as Christians, and still doomed to wear out their lives in cruel bondage ; and to leave their posterity to the same woful inheritance. And this not for any crimes alleged against them, any wrongs done to society by them, or anticipated from them, were they set free ; but merely because those who have power superior to theirs, have, with a view to their own interests, ordained that it should be so. And the church, by taking slavery into her bosom, adopts and baptizes it, and unites with the State in giving it protection and support.

Now, is it right—is it consistent with the spirit of the gospel, with that genuine benevolence which our Savior requires, and which constitutes the very essence of his religion, for his professed followers, for his churches, to pursue such a course as this, and to treat any portion of their fellow men in this manner ? Christ has commanded, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” And he has shown that every human being towards whom we have opportunity to manifest this benevolence, is to be accounted by us as our neighbor. The law is universal, requiring us to love all, even as ourselves ; and to do good to all men as we have opportunity. No circumstances pertaining to country or language, or complexion, or condition in life, can absolve us from the duty of obedience to this law. Let our neighbor be poor and despised and down-trodden, and in the view of the world fit only for slavery, yet we are required to love him even as ourselves ; and to treat him with all the kindness which we could reasonably desire to be extended unto us, in the same circumstances. Were this law of Christ universally obeyed, slavery with all its miseries must immediately and everywhere cease.

Christ is, if possible, yet more explicit. “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.” As it regards our

intercourse with society, our treatment of our fellow men, this is the great fundamental law of his kingdom—a law of universal and perpetual obligation. Let this law be applied to the consciences of slaveholders. They argue that they have a right to their slaves as property, because they are authorized by the laws of their country, and by the usages of society, thus to hold them. They plead that slaveholding has been practiced by all nations, that it was common among the Hebrews, and seems to be countenanced by such passages in the New Testament as require servants to be obedient to their masters. They maintain that under existing laws emancipation is extremely difficult, almost impossible, and that their slaves are in fact, better off in their present condition than they would be if liberated. These and such like arguments falling in with their love of power, wealth, and self-indulgence, may seem to them not only plausible, but unanswerable. But none of these arguments will abide the searching test of this great law of Christ. We are not ignorant that an individual now and then has had the boldness to assert, that in holding slaves he believed himself to be acting, not contrary to this law, but in obedience to it! But, unless in some uncommon cases where individuals are retaining for a time their legal right for the express purpose of protecting and elevating their slaves, how is this possible?

Look at the matter impartially. Suppose the case of the masters and of their slaves were in all respects commuted; that their complexions were exchanged; that those now the servants were made the masters; and the present masters with their families were made the slaves; that the same laws which now oppress and crush those in servitude were laid on *them*; that they were not allowed to call their time, or earnings, their bodies, or their souls their own; that their new masters should hold them as mere animals which they had an absolute right to use or dispose of at their pleasure; that they should advertise them for sale; and to accommodate purchasers should separate the different members of the same family from each other to meet no more on earth; should deprive them of all the advantages of education, of all the benefits of civil and religious liberty; and doom them to hopeless degradation;—how would the present masters, thus subjected to bondage, feel under such treatment? What would be their convictions in regard to the justice of it? Would they be satisfied with being told that slavery has been common among other nations; that it is authorized by the laws of our country; that they were made for slaves, and better off in a state of servitude than they would be in a state of freedom, being incapable of taking care of themselves? Would all or



any of these arguments be considered anything better than cruel insult and mockery? Would not their hearts swell with indignation, and all of them be ready to reiterate, with the deepest emotion, the declaration of our fathers, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" and would they not earnestly wish their oppressors to allow them the full enjoyment of all these rights and privileges? And would not this wish be not only natural, but *perfectly reasonable*? No one who makes the case his own will dispute it. But if the masters, being put in the place of the slaves, might reasonably desire to be emancipated, to be enfranchised, with all the privileges of freemen, then it is their manifest, their imperious duty to deal thus with those who are now subject to them, and by them deprived of their rights; for the immutable, the eternal rule of rectitude is, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Our Savior not only gave this valuable summary of the commandments, consisting of the second table of the decalogue, but he confirmed those commands in detail, and made them permanent laws of his kingdom. All these stand out in direct opposition to slaveholding. "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's." But the slaveholder does covet the wife and children, and earnings, and body and soul, of his slave—everything which is his. "Thou shalt not steal." The slaveholder not only covets everything which is his poor neighbor's, but without his consent takes possession, and appropriates all to himself! If it is a crime to take from a man by stealth or robbery his horse, or coat, or purse, how much greater must be the crime to thus take the man's wife and children, and himself? "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." But to testify that colored men and women are fit only for slavery, that it would not be for their benefit to raise them to a more elevated condition, that they have no right to complain of injustice on account of being held and treated as articles of property, provided they are comfortably clothed and fed, is *false testimony*, and that of the most cruel nature. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." But the slaveholder does not expect or wish this command to be obeyed. If he obeys it himself, yet he gives his support to a system of laws which effectually secures universal transgression and profligacy among the enslaved. Even the pious female is deprived of all legal protection or redress in case of insult or violence. That white men are extensively involved in this guilt, the complexions and features of

a vast portion of the slaves sufficiently indicate. "Honor thy father and thy mother." But how is it possible for the slave to do this, when he is not supposed to know who his father is, and has always been taught to look on his mother as a degraded and miserable being like himself? What honor or obedience can be paid to parents in a state of slavery? "Thou shalt not kill." But, alas! who can tell what numbers of the enslaved perish, yearly, in consequence of their hard toil under the driver's lash; the severe punishments inflicted on them; the painful separations which they experience, and the intolerable sufferings incident to their lot? This great system of oppression is utterly inconsistent with the law of God, and must involve those who practice it in fearful guilt.

Is not slaveholding contrary to the gospel? Does it not, when practiced by men professing to be the followers of the blessed Savior, bring disgrace on religion, and harden the hearts of men against its benign influences? The arguments which men professing religion bring in defence of their practice of slaveholding are infinitely dishonorable to the gospel, and eminently suited to cause it to be blasphemed and despised.

This may not be admitted by slaveholders. They are hard to be convinced; and we can scarcely expect from them even a candid hearing. My main business at present is not with them; but with that portion of the church which is not directly involved in this wickedness. What is the voice, the decision, of unprejudiced Christian people? Many churches and other ecclesiastical bodies have deliberated on this subject, and spoken plainly in regard to it; and what is the amount of their testimony? If any attempt should be made to disparage the views of slavery which I have presented, as partial, sectarian, fanatical, or at best as those of an obscure individual, I will now show that they are not peculiar to me; but strongly sustained by the declared convictions of numerous ministers and ecclesiastical bodies in different parts of the country, and of different denominations, who are certainly as capable of knowing what is, and what is not, according to the gospel, as any other man in this or any other land. Let them speak for themselves.

## THE TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES.

THE CONVENTION OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN THE STATE OF VERMONT have, repeatedly, borne strong testimony against slaveholding. In 1846, they passed the following resolutions:

*"Resolved, 1, That this Convention still believes and maintains*

that the great system of American slavery is, in its fundamental principles, contrary to the spirit and the gospel of Christ, and utterly sinful before God; that the laws which support it are unrighteous and cruelly oppressive; that the tendency of the system is, and must be, to degrade, demoralize, and destroy the souls of the enslaved, and to bring divine condemnation and wrath on those who thus enslave and wrong them; to disturb continually the peace which should subsist between the different States of our Union, and thus put in fearful peril our national welfare; to introduce and foster discord in our religious connexions; and thus to grieve from us the Spirit of God, and to hinder deplorably the progress of his kingdom both in this and in other lands; that these evils are not incidental, but inherent in the system, making it utterly incurable, and before both earth and heaven abominable: and for these reasons all men, especially all Christian men, ought to lift up a united voice of strong remonstrance against a system fraught with so much guilt and misery; and to do whatever they rightfully and judiciously can, to bring it to a speedy and final termination.

“*Resolved, 2.* That in case any of the members of our churches involve themselves, while holding connexion with us, in the guilt of upholding the slave system, by trading in the bodies and souls of their fellow-men, or extorting their involuntary and unrequited services, they ought to be considered and dealt with as guilty of conduct flagrantly unchristian.”

Other resolutions of the same spirit and general bearing were passed; and the Convention close their testimony with the declaration that the voice of remonstrance which they had thus lifted up in the fear of God, was addressed not to their own churches merely, but to all the ecclesiastical bodies with which the Convention were holding correspondence; especially to all slaveholding bodies; that they may do what in them lies for the speedy and entire removal of this tremendous evil.

It was thought, and publicly represented, by individuals, that the passage of these resolutions was precipitate; that if the Convention had taken time for reflection, they would have essentially modified some of them; but after a year's reflection, they re-affirmed them all, without the alteration of a word; which sufficiently shows that these are their established sentiments respecting slavery.

THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS.—This body at their meeting, in 1846, passed the following affirmation and resolution:

“The General Association of Massachusetts, having often and earnestly expressed their abhorrence of slavery, grieving that the system still exists, and is sustained by some Christians and Ecclesiastical Bodies as authorized by the Word of God—do solemnly re-affirm their faith, that the Word of God is utterly opposed to slavery as it exists



in these United States ; and that as far as the Word of God obtains the ascendancy in the heart and conscience of Christians and of the church, such Christians must and will separate themselves from all responsible connexions with the system ; and in the spirit of fraternal fidelity, we would earnestly beseech all Christians connected with the system, in view of their profession, to be living examples of the gospel, and in the light of God's truth carefully to review their opinions and practice, and to do their utmost to free the Church of Christ from the pollution of this guilt.

“ *Resolved*, That this expression of opinion be inserted on the minutes of the General Association, and that the Secretary be directed to transmit a copy of it to the several Ecclesiastical Bodies with which we are in correspondence.”

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MAINE.—This Body of the Congregational Churches in Maine, on receiving the above communication from their brethren in Massachusetts, at their meeting the same year, make this response :

“ As we have heretofore expressed our solemn conviction that the system of slavery existing in the United States is a great sin against God and man, and a most threatening evil, for which our nature ought to humble itself—and that the North, as well as the South, is deeply implicated in the guilt of slavery, and that for its speedy and entire removal every Christian ought to pray, and use all suitable means within his reach—we now re-affirm our abhorrence of the system, as being fraught with immense evil both to the oppressor and the oppressed.

“ Believing it to be entirely contrary to the Word of God, ‘ so far as that Word obtains an ascendancy in the conscience and hearts of Christians, they must and will separate themselves from all responsible connexion with the system.’ We do affectionately and earnestly entreat all slaveholders who profess to be the disciples of Him who came to preach deliverance to the captives—‘ in view of their profession, and in the light of God's Word, carefully and seriously to review their opinions and practice relating to this subject ; and to do their utmost to free the church from the pollution of this guilt.’ ”

They, moreover, directed their Secretary to transmit a copy of their doings in the case to each of the Ecclesiastical Bodies with which they hold correspondence. The earnest and strong remonstrances of this body against slaveholding, in years past, is well known.

THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE (1837) say :

“ We consider the principle of slavery, or that men may hold, regard, and treat their fellow-men as property, inconsistent with natural justice, utterly at variance with the spirit and the principles of the Bible, the fruitful source of wrong, suffering, and sin among men, of danger to our country, and a hindrance to the progress of the gospel.”

They recommend a free and candid discussion of the subject on all suitable occasions, the diffusion of light, and the promotion of correct moral sentiments as necessary means for "the removal of this enormity from our land." And in 1840, they addressed an earnest remonstrance to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, against the toleration of slaveholding in their churches, beseeching them to put this enormity away.

THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT (1837) declare—

"That to buy and sell human beings, and to hold them and treat them as merchandise ; or to treat servants, free or bond, in any manner inconsistent with the fact that they are intelligent and voluntary beings, made in the image of God, is a violation of the principles of the Word of God, and should be treated by all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ as an immorality inconsistent with a profession of the Christian religion."

*"An immorality inconsistent with a profession of the Christian religion."* Let this be remembered.

That several, if not all, of the METHODIST CONFERENCES, in the free States, agree with the venerated Wesley in pronouncing slaveholding to be "the sum of all villanies," and have for years been striving to deliver themselves from all criminal connexion with it, will appear from a due examination of their official acts.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY UNITARIAN MINISTERS have uttered their solemn protest against American slaveholding, (1845)—

"Because it is a violation of the law of Right, being the sum of all unrighteousness which man can do to man ; depriving him not only of his possessions, but of himself. And as in the possession of one's self are included all other rights, he who makes a man a slave, commits the greatest possible robbery, and the greatest possible wrong."

"Because it violates the law of Love, which says, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.'"

"Because it degrades man, the image of God, into a thing ; changes persons into property ; and, by violating the dignity of the human soul, is constant sacrilege against that soul which the Scriptures declare to be the temple of the Holy Ghost."

They enumerate many of the evils in which the slave system involves not only the enslaved, but their masters ; and protest against it on account of them all. In reply to the apology that slaves are often *well treated*, they justly say, "It is not a question of *treatment* but of *right* ; and the greatest kindness would

be no compensation for the *rights* which are withheld." The attempt to justify slaveholding on the ground of Scriptural authority, they decidedly repudiate, as not only entirely unfounded, but directly suited to cause the Holy Scriptures to be discredited and blasphemed.

THE BAPTIST MINISTERS OF BOSTON, in a declaration drawn up for general circulation in their denomination (1847), after setting forth some of the well known evils involved in slavery, say :

"With such a system we can have no sympathy. After a careful observation of its character and effects, and making every deduction which the largest charity can require, we are constrained to regard it as an outrage upon the rights and happiness of our fellow-men for which there is no justification or apology. We can, therefore, sustain no relation, and perform no act, that will countenance the system, or imply indifference to its multiplied enormities. Against it, as a mass of complicated and flagrant wrong, we must record and proclaim our solemn protest. And especially must we, as ministers of the Son of God, protest against those perversions of the Sacred Oracles by which it is attempted to make their Divine Author the patron and protector of a system which is so entirely repugnant to their principles and spirit."

THREE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SIX MINISTERS OF THE FREEWILL BAPTIST CONNEXION (1847) solemnly declare slaveholding to be "a direct violation of the Law of Benevolence, and the obligations enforced by our Religion ;" a system giving encouragement to "war, licentiousness, gambling, Sabbath-breaking, and almost every sin with which our land is cursed"—"a fearful outrage on humanity"—"a foul system, with which no holy being in the Universe can have any sympathy"—and publicly withdrew themselves from all voluntary connexion with "this enormous evil." "We, therefore, by refusing to support slavery, its principles or its advocates, and *by withholding Christian and Church fellowship from all guilty of the sin of slavery* ; and by remembering those in bonds as bound with them, would wish to wash our hands from the guilt of this iniquity."

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, at their general meeting in 1845, unanimously concurred in bearing this testimony against slavery :

"Viewed in all its bearings, *it is a tremendous evil*. Its destructive influence is seen on the morals of the master and slave. It sweeps away those barriers which every civilized community has erected to protect the purity and chastity of the family relations. We also see its baneful effects on the rising generation. A great portion of the red



people who own slaves" (for of them, in the language of one of their missionaries, they are speaking), "neglect entirely to train their children to habits of industry, enterprise, and economy, so necessary in forming the character of the parent and citizen. Slavery, so far as it extends, will ever present formidable obstacles to the right training of the rising generation."

Of course its direct and mighty influence is to resist the commands of God which require parents to train their children for his service ; and to render all efforts for their salvation unavailing. Why should such a deadly curse be taken into the bosom of the church ?—of the missionary churches among the Indians ?

The truth of these heavy charges against slaveholding, cannot be honestly denied even by those Ecclesiastical bodies which tolerate the practice among them. Many proofs might be adduced from their own public declarations, in years past. It may be sufficient, at present, to refer to the testimony of THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD, in 1818. They plainly acknowledge that—

"The voluntary enslaving of men is a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature ; utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires every man to love his neighbor as himself ; and totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ, which requires that 'all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ;' that it exhibits rational, immortal, and accountable creatures in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action ;—that it makes men dependent on the will of others whether they shall receive religious instruction ; know and worship the true God ; maintain their chastity and purity ; or perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children." "This," they say, "is not an imaginary view, but is inherent in the very nature of slavery." "The evils to which the slave is always exposed, often take place in fact, and in the worst form ; and though we rejoice to say that many masters are kind and humane ; yet the slave is deprived of his natural rights ; degraded as a human being ; and exposed to the danger of passing into the hands of a master who *may inflict* upon him all the hardships and injuries which inhumanity and avarice may suggest."

Since that time the General Assembly has been divided into two—both of which, in 1846, bore similar testimony against this enormous iniquity. The Old School General Assembly say, definitely, that nothing which has been done by that body, of late years, is to be construed as inconsistent with the action of the General Assembly in 1818, and in years preceding. It is then—

"A gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature—utterly inconsistent with the law of God."

THE SYNOD OF KENTUCKY, in their pastoral Address in 1836, speaking of slaveholding as it exists and is practiced among themselves, affirm that—

“It dooms thousands of human beings to hopeless ignorance.” “It deprives its subjects in a great measure of the privileges of the gospel.” “This system licenses and produces great cruelty.” “Brutal stripes and all the varied kinds of personal indignities are not the only species of cruelty which slavery licenses. The law does not recognise the family relations of a slave, and extends to him no protection in the enjoyment of domestic endearments. The members of a slave family may be forcibly separated, so that they shall never more meet until the final judgment. And rapacity often induces masters to practice what the law allows. Brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, are torn asunder, and permitted to see each other no more. *These acts are daily occurring in the midst of us.* The shrieks and the agony often witnessed on such occasions proclaim, with a trumpet tongue, the iniquity and cruelty of our system. The cry of these sufferers goes up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. There is not a neighborhood where these scenes are not displayed. There is not a village or road that does not behold the sad procession of manacled outcasts, whose chains and mournful countenances tell that they are exiled by force from all that their hearts held most dear. Our church, years ago, raised its voice of solemn warning against this flagrant violation of every principle of mercy, justice, and humanity. Yet we blush to announce to you that this warning has been often disregarded, *even by those who hold to our communion.* Cases have occurred in our own denomination where professors of the religion of mercy have torn the mother from her children, and sent her into a merciless and returnless exile. *Yet acts of discipline have rarely followed such conduct.*”

Again they say :

“*It produces general licentiousness among the slaves.*” “*Their licentiousness is the necessary result of our system.*”

Nor do they shrink from adding this most melancholy confession :

“*Our familiarity with this consequence of slavery prevents us from regarding it with that horror which it would, under other circumstances, inspire.*”

They acknowledge that they shall never be able to keep themselves entirely pure even from the grossest pollutions of slavery until they are willing to pledge themselves to the destruction of the whole system.

Other testimony of like import, and to almost any extent, might be adduced—the testimony, not of a few individuals charged with fanaticism, but of great and highly respectable Ecclesiastical Bodies, not only in the free States, but in the slave States ; with the living and hideous reality continually

before them ; even in their own habitations, and in their houses of religious worship ; tolerated and cherished by multitudes of their own church members.

Now, if we know what the Christian religion is, if we have any knowledge of the true meaning of the divine law, any right impressions respecting the true spirit and design of the gospel, any just idea of right and of wrong ; we are as sure as we are of our existence, that the great system of American slaveholding, as defined by the laws which have created and are upholding it, and as generally practiced, in the church as well as out of it, is directly contrary to this religion ; to the law of God ; to the gospel of Christ ; to all moral rectitude ; and ought to be held in universal abhorrence as one of the most dreadful systems of oppression and iniquity which can be found on earth.

If, then, opinions or practices flagrantly contrary to the gospel, constitute valid grounds for withdrawing Christian fellowship from ministers and churches who maintain these opinions, or allow themselves in those practices ; and if, as I have shown, *slaveholding is manifestly contrary to the gospel*, and when practiced, or vindicated, or countenanced, by professed Christians, most injurious to the honor and prosperity of the Christian religion ; what good cause can be assigned why we should not wholly withdraw fellowship from those ministers and churches, or larger ecclesiastical bodies, who practice, justify, or tolerate, this “flagrant immorality”—“this great sin against both God and man ?” I speak not of slaveholding in isolated instances of voluntary consent on the part of the slave, and of seemingly good intention on the part of the master, but of slaveholding as generally practiced in the church. Are there any sufficient reasons why those who practice, or tolerate it, should not be treated as the gospel requires in other cases of dangerous heresy or flagrant immorality ? Does this sin constitute any *exception* to the general rule ? I firmly believe it does not ; and proceed to show—

III. That we are under the same obligations to withdraw from professed Christians, and especially ecclesiastical bodies who practice or tolerate slaveholding, as we are to withdraw from those who maintain any other dangerous heresy, or who practice any other flagrant immorality.

This must be the fact, unless some valid reasons, or at least reason, can be adduced to the contrary. If any such reasons exist, they may, doubtless, be found in some of the various apologies and arguments which have been addressed to the public within a few years past by the advocates of the system, and



others who, while they condemn it, are in favor of tolerating it in the church. But these reasons, though they may satisfy those who offer them, must, one would think, appear wholly unsatisfactory to every unprejudiced mind.

#### A PECULIAR INSTITUTION.

Slaveholding has been often spoken of as *a peculiar institution*, which, though in itself wrong, should be treated with special favor. A sort of consecrated system of iniquity which must not be so viewed and condemned as to criminate, seriously, the individuals constituting the mass who uphold and practice it. It is, indeed, a peculiar institution—peculiar for its outrageous injustice, its cruel oppression, its flagrant violation of all human rights, and utter disregard of the will of God as expressed both in his law and gospel. It is an extensive, strongly-established system of iniquity, peculiar for its enormity. But why should it be treated with favor on account of any such notorious peculiarity? Such claims show the shocking arrogance of this giant iniquity; and over the minds of its subjects may have power, but can never command the respect of those who think for themselves and are beyond the reach of its deadly influence. Its peculiar atrocity constitutes sufficient ground for its being viewed with peculiar abhorrence, and opposed with special determination and energy.

#### THE MORAL CHARACTER OF SLAVEHOLDING CHANGED ESSENTIALLY, AND IMPROVED, DURING THE LAPSE OF TIME.

Slaveholding, it is said, though wrong in its beginning, yet, having been practiced for more than two hundred years, and become intimately incorporated with the entire frame work of Southern society and business, is no longer to be regarded as a moral evil; it has, in the course of time, so entirely changed its character that the present race of slaveholders cannot, with any justice, be held responsible for the existence of the institution; or for transmitting it, unimpaired, to their posterity. If this is true, then surely we ought not to withdraw fellowship from our Southern brethren on account of their supporting the system. But if a thing, or practice, is wrong in its beginning, how can ages or the progress of time make it right? Robbery, piracy, and war are the same now, as in earlier ages of the world. Time has had no influence to sanctify them. They are as injurious to men, as odious in the view of God, as heavily condemned of him, as they ever were. The combined opposition of the wicked against the divine government is of long standing; thousands of years ago they began to say, "What is the Al-

mighty that we should serve him?" and have continued in their rebellion until the present day. But is this opposition any more justifiable now than it was in its beginning? has its nature been changed? has it become venerable and lawful, because it has been maintained so many ages and such multitudes have been and are engaged in it? Not at all. Those now found in rebellion against God are even more guilty and hell-deserving than their predecessors, as they sin against greater light, and more openly in view of the consequences.

A comparison has been attempted between the justice of holding the present race of slaves in bondage, and that of retaining lands or territories which were originally obtained unjustly, by fraud or conquest. Look for a moment at this matter. To acquire possessions by acts of injustice always was, and must be, wrong; and to retain these possessions while the original owners, or their legal heirs, have a better right to them, must be equally wrong. Perseverance in a wrong course cannot convert that course into a right one. So long as reparation is possible, it ought to be made. But supposing all the original owners of lands, or other property, unjustly taken, and all their known heirs, have ceased from the earth; that restitution *cannot* be made, because there is no one to receive it; then there is no wrong in retaining and rightly using that which was at first unjustly acquired. The guilt lies on them who did the wrong, or who refused to redress it while possible; and not on those who have themselves done no injustice, and have no power to make amends for the injustice done by their deceased predecessors.

But how does this furnish any apology for the present generation of slaveholders? Their ancestors did wrong in purchasing the first slaves, and thus establishing the accursed institution. The children of those first slaveholders did wrong in adopting their views and pursuing their oppressive course. And the present race are not less guilty, inasmuch as they willingly have taken possession of the inheritance which was by their predecessors unjustly obtained for them, and refuse to relinquish the property in favor of the true owners—refuse to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.

The institution of slavery has not merely been *perpetuated*, but has been, by successive acts of injustice and oppression *continually renewed*. Death, long since, released those who were originally enslaved. Their children were enslaved by new acts of fraud and violence. The present race of slaveholders have obtained their human chattels by their own acts. Each of their slaves has an inalienable right to use his own bodily and mental faculties for his own benefit. He has a right to himself. And

to withhold from him the enjoyment of that right is "the greatest possible wrong." The time never comes when justice might not, and ought not, to be done to the enslaved;—when the rights which have been wrenched from them ought not to be restored. While they live, the persons are living, and at hand, to whom reparation ought to be made. Those who have the power to do this, and refuse, cruelly and continually wrong them. The present race of slaveholders cannot free themselves from responsibility by criminating their fathers. Both are deeply guilty before God. If *they* do not so view the matter, it is, no doubt, because avarice and familiarity with this iniquity have blinded their eyes.

#### A CIVIL, AND NOT A RELIGIOUS, INSTITUTION.

It has been argued that as slavery was established and is upheld by civil authority, the church is not responsible for it; and church members are not to be censured for doing what the laws of the land have authorized. But, have not church members taken an efficient part, with the men of the world, in making and upholding these unrighteous laws? And if so, with what pretence of justice can they avail themselves of these same unrighteous laws as their justification in holding their fellow-men in bondage? Again, can any human law abrogate the divine law? any permission, or even requisition, of human authority make it right to do anything which God forbids; or which is plainly contrary to the principles of the gospel? Because a man has a license from civil authority to keep a brothel, or gambling house, or drunkery, does that make it right for him to do so? Has the church no authority to call him to account? Because war has, without sufficient cause, been proclaimed against a neighboring people, does that make it right for individuals to volunteer their services, and go forth to the work of human butchery? Do individuals in such cases merge their responsibility in that of the government? By no means. Every one is accountable for his own acts. We know nothing of sin belonging to organized bodies for which the individuals constituting those bodies are not personally responsible. Every one who consents to that sin is a partaker of it. When the king of Babylon published a solemn decree that whosoever would not worship the image he had set up, Shadrach and his companions did not believe that this decree could make it right for them to worship that image. Sooner than obey, they would be cast into the furnace of fire. Daniel, too, would rather be thrown to the lions than cease from praying to his God, though required by sovereign authority to do so. The ancient martyrs all supposed they ought to refuse to



obey civil authority whenever it arrayed itself against the authority of God. The church, instead of falling in with the injustice and the abominations of slavery, merely because sanctioned by human laws, ought to use their utmost endeavors to have those laws repealed ;—and, while in force, their language should be, Whether it be right to obey man rather than God, judge ye.

#### THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES.

It is strongly maintained that the apostles tolerated slave holding ; that they received slaveholders into the church ; and that it is right for us to follow their example in regard to the matter. To this I reply,

1. That as the term *doulos* is manifestly used in the original New Testament in all the latitude of meaning which we give to our term servant, we cannot determine from the corresponding term *kurios*, or master, that those masters who were received into the church were all, or any of them, *slaveholders*, in the ordinary sense. Our Savior himself is commonly distinguished by this epithet ; in his case usually rendered *Lord*. The term *despotes*, less frequently used, although translated master, is also applied to the Savior, and by no means commonly denotes a slaveholder. These mere terms afford no certain proof whether slaveholding did or did not, exist in the churches gathered by the apostles ; and it concerns those who would justify its admission and toleration now, by reference to their example, to look well to their premises ; and to establish, firmly, their supposed fact, by other evidences than the mere use of general terms, before they hasten to a conclusion, so deeply interesting not only to slaveholders and slaves, but to the church of Christ in all ages. The burden of proof is fairly on those who maintain that the fact was as they represent.

2. Practices may, in certain circumstances, be suffered even by good and inspired men, which in different circumstances, would justly be deemed intolerable. Abundant proof might easily be produced. See the first family which ever existed on earth ; own brothers and sisters were united in marriage and became the heads of new families ; but when the *necessity* had passed away, the practice was, by the supreme Lawgiver strictly prohibited, and made infamous. Witness again the patriarchal practice of polygamy and concubinage, and of divorce for almost every cause, suffered by the law of Moses on account of the hardness of the people's hearts, but wholly discountenanced and condemned by Christ. Witness, too, what the apostle says of God's winking at, or overlooking the sins of past ages on account

of the great ignorance of the people, but now commanding all men everywhere to repent. Transgressions of the divine law are more or less criminal in proportion to the degree of light against which they are committed.

If, then, it could be shown, beyond doubt, that the apostles, under the heathen and tyrannical government of Rome, where human rights were generally but very imperfectly understood, and the practice of selling into slavery the captives taken in war was almost universal, did receive some converts, while holding such slaves, into the church, it would only prove that it would now be right to do so in precisely similar circumstances; the master's amount of knowledge, the nature of the government under which he lives, his disposition to do right so far as he knows what is right, and the various difficulties in his way, all being essentially the same. But the circumstances of professed Christians in this country, under a government formed and administered by the people, after so much has been said and published against oppression, and in defence of human rights, are in many respects, very different from the circumstances of any brethren under the iron government of Rome, in the days of the apostles. To uphold and practice slavery now, is, beyond doubt, far more criminal than it then was. Even in our own day, various wrong practices have become more flagrantly wrong, and inexcusable. What would be thought of professed Christians engaging now in the foreign slave trade, as they once did? Or of their drinking intoxicating liquors, or retailing them for others to drink, as they were accustomed to do at no remote period? These practices, though but a few years since tolerated by the churches, are now strongly and justly condemned. If then, it could be shown, more clearly than it has been, that the apostles were so forbearing in their treatment of slaveholders, as to admit them to the church on a profession of the Christian faith, while yet holding their slaves in bondage—holding them as articles of property, it will by no means follow that the same thing may justly be done now, either by ministers or churches, in exceedingly different circumstances. To argue from what they did, or are supposed to have done, in certain peculiar circumstances, must surely be very loose and dangerous reasoning. But I proceed to prove

3. That if the apostles received converted slaveholders into the church, yet they did it under such restrictions and obligations, as must, if duly regarded, have entirely changed the condition of their slaves, and raised them at once from the state of merchantable commodities to the enjoyment of the rights of rational and accountable persons.

That there were persons called *masters*, in the church, is universally admitted. Various explicit instructions are given to such respecting their duty to their servants. These servants might have been of different orders and conditions. That they were *all slaves* no man can prove. On the contrary, that *none* of them were slaves, up to the time of the conversion of their masters, and at least nominally so at the time when those masters were received into the church, I shall not undertake to make out. In view of the almost universal prevalence of slavery at that time, I see no reason to doubt that more or less of these believing masters had been slaveholders, in the ordinary sense. Be this as it may, it is certain that the instructions which the apostles gave to masters, regarding their duty to their servants, are without partiality, and enjoin that they should treat servants of every condition, in the same benevolent and equitable manner. None of them are allowed to treat any class of their servants as *things*, as mere animals, to be used or disposed of for the benefit of their owners, having no sacred rights of their own; but all are required to treat their servants as members of the same great family with themselves; as rational and immortal beings who are entitled to the same benevolence and justice with the rest of their fellow men. This will presently be shown. Masters who came into the church, by so doing, solemnly bound themselves to obey the gospel, to obey the commands and instructions of the apostles in all things; and so far as slaveholders uniting with the church, if any such there were, did so, their slaveholding was virtually, and in fact, *abolished*. Under the power of the gospel, their views, their feelings, and conduct, in regard to their slaves, were entirely changed; and the injustice of holding human beings as chattels, in which the very essence of slavery consists, ceased. If any masters who were received with this explicit understanding, failed thus to treat their servants, they, of course walked disorderly; they were covenant-breakers, and liable, after due admonition, to be excluded from the church. In this way the work of abolishing this cruel and iniquitous system, so far as the church was concerned, was effectually, and at the same time without public disturbance, carried forward.

That this view of the matter is essentially correct seems manifest from such considerations, and scriptural passages, as these. The divine law, contained in the decalogue, and as expounded and summed up by our Savior, the apostles strongly inculcated as a law of universal and everlasting obligation. But this law, as has been already shown, is directly and utterly opposed to the holding and treating of our fellow men as slaves. On this point I need not now insist.



Again, if the apostles did not come directly out against slaveholding as an organized system, condemn it by name, and seek its destruction both soul and body at once, by some violent movement; yet they did what in their circumstances was not less effectual, by expressly condemning and seeking to destroy all its constituent parts, in detail. Slavery was an overgrown monster of fearful power, glutting itself on human victims; and the apostles proceeded as skilful assailants by wounding it in any and in every part as they could find opportunity; chopping off one extremity after another, one hydra head after another; and finally laying open the huge carcass, and destroying its ugly heart. Let us look into their epistles and see for ourselves.

“Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, and such like,” are declared to be such sins as will exclude those who do them, from the kingdom of God. Gal. v. 19—22. “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Cor. vi. 10. Again, “Let no man go beyond and defraud [or oppress], his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.” Thess. iv. 6. Masters are charged to forbear threatening; and to remember that they have a master in Heaven with whom there is no respect of persons. Eph. vi. 6. They are solemnly forewarned that God will hold them responsible for every act of injustice. “Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” James v. 4. This is addressed not to fraudulent masters exclusively, but to all who refused to recompense their laborers equitably. In another epistle, Col. iv. 1, we have this express command, “Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye have also a Master in heaven.”

Now we know that most or all of the vices and crimes here forbidden are inherent in the slave system, or as naturally produced by it as any effects are by their appropriate causes. How is it possible to uphold the slave system, either as it then was, or now is, without willingly and purposely tolerating and giving encouragement to a universal and shameful violation of the seventh commandment, among those who are thus held in bondage? Their masters, in most cases, do not expect or wish them to regard it. Let this one commandment be strictly obeyed by all in bondage, and slavery as a system, must cease. Again, where there is no covetousness, no extortion, no fraud, no theft, no withholding from servants a fair compensation for their services,

no threatening, and of course no stripes to secure obedience, how is it possible for slavery, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, to exist? As well might there be matter, after all its essential properties have been obstructed. Especially, if masters render to their servants that which is *just and equal*, how is it possible for them at the same time to withhold from them the natural rights which all men have to their own bodies and minds? to their own time and earnings? and to their own children and wedded companions? How can they render to them that which is just and equal, and at the same time despoil them of their liberty; and without any just cause hold them in a state of abject slavery, as mere articles of property when they have committed no crime to merit any such doom? Let these commands be obeyed by all slaveholders in the church and the evil will be removed from it at once. Obedience to these and such like commands is clearly and absolutely incompatible with slaveholding.

Let those who profess to hold their slaves by apostolical authority either obey the apostles' commands, regarding the duty of masters to their servants, or relinquish all pretensions to any such right to hold them. It is surely no more than right that those who profess to be authorized by the New Testament should obey all its precepts. Let them do so, and the death blow is given to their slaveholding, at once. The fact is, the apostles nowhere give the least countenance to holding and treating human beings as mere articles of property.

And it is by the spirit and commands of the New Testament *directly applied* to the evils involved in slaveholding, and not through some indefinite and mysterious influence of the gospel, as generally preached, that this odious system of oppression is to be abolished among professed Christians. The gospel may be preached as it generally is, even to the end of time, without removing, or materially mitigating the evils of slavery. But its express commands, forbidding every act of injustice, and strictly requiring masters to do that which is just and equal—to do for their servants just what they could reasonably wish to be done for themselves and their children if placed in the same circumstances, directly applied to the consciences of slaveholders, and solemnly enforced by the authority of God, will be found to be of mighty efficiency. It was in this pointed and direct way that Christ preached to the scribes and pharisees, the publicans, the soldiers, and other classes of transgressors. Under such a faithful exhibition of divine truth, duly regarded, slavery can no more exist than war can exist where there is no hatred, no strife, no variance, no acts of violence, no wounds, no shedding of blood, or attempts to destroy. Masters who obeyed the instructions

of the apostles, as all who were received into the church covenanted to do, of course ceased, in fact, and in the ordinary sense of the term, to be slaveholders. And thus, we see that slaveholding was *not* tolerated by the apostles in the churches which they gathered.

In the case of *Philemon* and *Onesimus* we have a beautiful illustration of Paul's views in regard to this matter. During the imprisonment of Paul at Rome, Onesimus, formerly a servant or slave, of Philemon, a Christian man at Colosse, having escaped from his master, came to the apostle ; and through his faithful instructions was converted, and became strongly attached to him. Whether Philemon was a Christian man at the time Onesimus left him does not appear. But both, now having become decidedly pious, and an intimate friendship subsisting between them both and the apostle, he was desirous that they might be reconciled to each other and rejoice together in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. He, accordingly, seems to have advised Onesimus to return ; and writes a friendly letter for him to deliver to his former master. Onesimus returns willingly ; no compulsion being used. But did Paul expect that he was going back into a state of slavery—to be held and treated as a brute animal—to be, perhaps, seized and punished as an example of warning to others ? Did he expect that by sending him back, he and his posterity, if he should have any, would be doomed to hopeless bondage ? By no means. He speaks of this Onesimus as his own son ; and beseeches Philemon to receive him as such, to receive him as he would Paul himself, if he should come to him ; to receive him not as a servant, or slave ; mind that, not as a servant ; but more than a servant—even as a *brother*, beloved both in the flesh and in the Lord. If Onesimus owed Philemon anything, the apostle tells him to set that to his account ; but intimates a strong belief that no claim of that sort would be preferred. And he expresses the fullest confidence that Philemon would readily do all he had requested, and more. And there is every reason to believe that his wishes and expectations were fully realized ; that the former master and servant met together in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, as brethren in the Lord, mentally delighting to promote each other's happiness. What good man, what good abolitionist, now, would not rejoice to effect similar reconciliations, and to witness again such manifestations of the power of true religion ? It is most astonishing that this rich display of Christian courtesy, benevolence and justice, should have ever been thought of by slaveholders as giving the least countenance to their system. Let their fugitives firmly believe that they will be received and treated as Onesimus



was, not as slaves, but as brethren beloved ; with all the cordiality which a truly Christian man would show towards the chief of the apostles ; and there will be no need of the hunters with their dogs and deadly weapons, to seize them and force them back. As for Onesimus, the report is, that, with the approbation of Philemon he returned again to the apostle, and remained with him as one of his chief friends and helpers, during the remainder of his imprisonment.

The more I study the scriptures of the New Testament, and the epistles of Paul and the other apostles, the more thoroughly am I satisfied that they do not give the least countenance to slaveholding—that the apostles never received men into the church with permission to persist in this practice ; and that, while they troubled not themselves about the *mere names*, masters and servants, they allowed no man to hold or treat his fellow man in any way inconsistent with perfect benevolence and justice, and the full enjoyment of all his natural rights as a man, and a servant of God. But to do this while subjecting our fellow men to involuntary bondage, while holding and treating them as mere articles of property, is clearly impossible. Slaveholding and the gospel are, and must for ever be, diametrically opposed to each other.

#### NO GOSPEL RIGHT TO BAR MEN FROM COMMUNION FOR ANY CAUSE WHATEVER BUT LACK OF APPARENT PIETY.

It has been strongly maintained that if we make slaveholding a bar to communion at the table of the Lord, we set up a standard for the trial of Christian character which the gospel has never authorized ; that satisfactory evidence of piety, and that alone, is to be required of those who desire admission into the church.

In regard to this sentiment I reply,

1. It is freely admitted, that, without satisfactory evidence of true piety no one can with any propriety be received as a member of any of our evangelical churches. The apostles strictly required faith in Christ, repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, in those whom they received, and organized into churches. And, as a general rule, all who apply for admittance, and give satisfactory evidence of having been thus renewed in heart, ought to be received as church members without objection. But,

2. There may be sufficient reasons why some who give more or less evidence of piety should not be received immediately. In view of the well known deceitfulness of the human heart, and of the danger of giving some encouragement to a false hope, it has long been the practice of many ministers and churches to advise those who really appear to be new converts, to wait awhile,

before they unite with the church, in order to acquire and afford still more satisfactory evidence of piety. This course has been found to be far more judicious and safe, and honorable to religion, than any more hasty proceeding. But individuals entertaining a hope that they have been converted do *not*, always, appear well. We see in their case, things which lead us to doubt in the genuineness of their piety. Suppose an individual applying for admission to the church, rejects, or is in doubt respecting some of the doctrines which we deem of vital importance to the Christian system ; we advise him to wait until he has been better instructed ; though we may not be without hope of his piety. If one who has long given satisfactory evidence of personal religion has at length, like David and Peter, fallen into some deplorable sin, we certainly ought not to receive him into the church, or express our confidence in him as a Christian brother, until he gives renewed and good evidence of sincere repentance and reformation. Or suppose a man in heathen lands manifests great interest in religious instruction, and seems to leave the truth so far as he understands it ; and professes to have faith in Christ ; but holds to caste and polygamy ; and does not see in all cases the evil of idolatry ; surely he ought not, while entertaining these views, to be received into the church of Christ. The missionary may hope that there is a good work begun in him ; but he will also have his fears ; and must be satisfied that to admit even a Christian man in that state of mind, would bring dishonor on religion, and probably be injurious to the man himself. One must be not only pious at heart, but his faith and conduct must so far agree therewith, that he may honor his profession and not be a stumbling block in the way of others.

3. There are some practices so flagrantly wrong that we ought not to have any confidence in the professed piety of those who allow themselves in them. We cannot reach their hearts so as to know with absolute certainty that there is not some good thing there, some germ of holiness too deeply buried to appear ; but we can have no satisfactory evidence that such is the fact. “ By their fruits,” said Christ, “ shall ye know them.” Suppose a man allows himself to live in the habitual practice of any of those immoralities for which, as the apostle declares, the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience ; suppose he allows himself to use profane language, to commit adultery, to practice fraud, to steal, to use intoxicating liquors to excess, to oppress and wrong his fellow men in any way ; we justly consider these actions such evidences of his destitution of the Spirit of Christ and favor of God, that we can have no confidence in his profession of piety. Let the searcher of all hearts be his judge ;

but surely no one has any right to claim to be considered or treated as a Christian while pursuing any of these, or such like, evil practices. Until he gives evidence of sincere repentance, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, he *ought not* to be so considered or treated.

4. I maintain, and as it seems to me have proved, that slaveholding, as defined by the civil laws of this country, and as commonly practiced in the church as well as out of it, is such an act of oppression and injustice, such a transgression of God's law, and of the precepts of Christ and the apostles, that he who is guilty of it ought not to be fellowshiped as a Christian.

I say slaveholding as defined by the laws and commonly practiced. I speak not of the *name*, but the thing itself—not of exceptions, where the genuine spirit of slaveholding and the treatment which naturally grows out of it are wanting—but of the general rule—the common practice. If a slaveholder who hopes that he has been truly converted, on being definitely and fully instructed in his duty to his slaves, as taught by Christ and his apostles, is willing to perform his duty towards them, and they are willing on that condition to remain with him, and he proves faithful, doing as he would be done by, abstaining from all acts of fraud and oppression, rendering to them that which is just and equal; and, consequently, duly respects all their rights, and so far as possible guards against the possibility of their being deprived of these rights by others; I do not withdraw fellowship from that man on account of his being called a slaveholder. I like not the name; there is an odium attached to it which this man ought not to bear, inasmuch as he is a slaveholder only in name, and not in reality;—and then there is great danger that while he is thus miscalled a slaveholder, others will derive encouragement from his reputation to persist in the most unjustifiable oppression. There seems to be no way to clear the church entirely from this scandal but by its members universally putting away from them even the *name* of slaveholding. Still a fair and just discrimination is ever to be made between the mere name and the deplorable reality. I am satisfied that he who is a slaveholder only in name, and whose general course of life, and treatment of his servants are in accordance with the gospel, may be, and doubtless is, a truly upright and Christian man; and ought to be so considered and received.

But I say again, that my business is not with these exceptions, which are uncommon, but with slaveholding as it is; as it is in the church; with real slaveholding; with that which robs a man of all the inalienable rights of humanity; and unjustly holds him in hopeless bondage. This, I maintain, is an im



morality ; a sin against both God and man, which never ought to have been suffered to pollute God's heritage ; which has no more right to be in the church than Satan had to be in Paradise. Churches which have grown up amid slavery, which were in their very origin constituted, at least in part, of slaveholders, may view the matter differently. They may be too near this enormity to get a full and correct view of it ; or too much under its influence, and crushed by its power to deliver themselves from it. But I appeal to all men who stand aloof from the evil and are qualified to judge of it impartially ; to all good ministers and enlightened Christian people ; to all the great Ecclesiastical Bodies in the free States of the Union and in foreign lands ; whether slaveholding, as generally practiced, is not entirely contrary to the gospel, and a thing too abominable to be tolerated in the church of Christ. These bodies have testified already, in terms too explicit and positive to be misunderstood.

"Slavery," they affirm, "is directly contrary to the spirit and the gospel of Christ—and utterly sinful before God. Those who practice it are guilty of conduct flagrantly immoral."

"The Word of God is utterly opposed to slavery. It is a great sin against both God and man—a most threatening evil."

"It is inconsistent with natural justice ; and utterly at variance with the principles of the Bible—a great hindrance to the progress of the gospel."

"Slaveholding is an outrage on the rights and happiness of our fellow-men ; for which there is no justification or apology."

"A tremendous evil—utterly inconsistent with the law of God ; and totally irreconcilable with the spirit and the precepts of the gospel of Christ."

"A system of iniquity, utterly incurable, and before earth and heaven abominable—tending, directly and powerfully, to hinder the progress of the gospel ; to corrupt and disgrace the church ; and to destroy the souls both of the oppressors and the oppressed."

"A foul system, with which no holy being in the universe can have any sympathy."

Such is the solemn testimony not of a few individuals of prejudiced minds and violent tempers ; nor of bodies of men who have organized themselves for the express purpose of making war upon slavery ; but of large Ecclesiastical Bodies of various denominations ; and distinguished for their intelligence, moderation, and brotherly kindness. Their testimony refers to slaveholding in the church as well as out of it ; and is undeniably true.

And this enormous system of iniquity does not exist without

supporters ; it is not within the pale of the church, practicing there its abominations, without the consent of the church. And if the Ecclesiastical Bodies to which these churches belong have no power over it, it is because these churches have purposely constituted them without any such power, so that they may persist in slaveholding undisturbed by their action. These bodies are the representatives of the churches, and closely allied with them in their views, feelings, and habits. It is not to be expected that streams will rise above their sources. Of slaveholding churches, Synods, General Assemblies, and Conferences, Isaiah's description of the Jewish Church is mournfully true, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

These churches and larger bodies have been entreated to put this crying evil away ; numerous and solemn remonstrances against slaveholding have been addressed to them. But they refuse to hear. They say let us alone. They are more than formerly attempting to justify themselves on scriptural ground ; and many of their members are holding their victims with a firmer grasp. This is no matter of discouragement. Men are accustomed to contend strongly against unwelcome truth before they yield to it. The power of disease is never more apparent than when specific remedies are driving it from its strong holds. Slaveholding in the churches, with no doubt some few exceptions, is not merely nominal—but it is the living and stern reality—that very system of outrage and iniquity which the civil laws have authorized—it is that accursed system which deprives human beings of all their inalienable rights—which seizes them at their birth and dooms them to abject and cruel servitude for life. Those who do these things in the church, as well as out of it, do them freely ; and with determination to persevere in them. The churches suffer them to do so, without an effort to convince them of the evil of their ways, and to bring them to repentance. And the Ecclesiastical Bodies organized by those churches tolerate them, and at least indirectly, countenance them in their gross neglect of duty ; and will not hear Christian remonstrance on account of their so doing.

In this state of things, what is the duty of those Ecclesiastical Bodies which have declared slaveholding to be a great sin against both God and man, and those who voluntarily practice it to be guilty of conduct flagrantly immoral ? Suppose gambling, intemperance, piracy, and such like crimes, were known to be extensively practiced and tolerated by any division of the church with which we have been holding brotherly correspondence ; what would the gospel require us to do ? Suppose the government of our nation should so alter the laws as to suffer

the people to engage freely, as in former times, in the foreign slave trade ; and many of the members of the Southern churches should avail themselves of the privilege ; and the churches should tolerate their conduct, what would the gospel require us to do ? While I am writing, a war of conquest is waged by our country against Mexico, and great anxiety is manifested, in high places, to make that Republic bear both the odium and the expense of the war. Suppose Congress, wanting other available resources, should order the numerous prisoners who have been taken, to be sent home by our officers, and sold in the Southern markets for slaves ; and that in view of the superior beauty and accomplishments of such slaves, they should be eagerly sought after, in preference to those of African descent ; and church members, among others, should throng the markets, and bid off many of them, and drive them home in chains, and subject them to precisely such servitude as their negro servants are enduring ; and the church should suffer it, and still retain these slave-dealers in good fellowship ; what would the gospel require us to do ? Anything ? This mode of procuring and holding slaves is precisely that which some would have us believe the apostles approbated. The Roman government was almost perpetually waging wars of conquest against other countries, and their victorious generals were in the habit of sending or bringing home multitudes of their captives for slaves. No matter of what nation they were ; what were their accomplishments, or had been their standing in society in their respective countries. Suppose the Mexicans should, in their turn, subject such of our officers and men as they have been enabled to capture (for they have taken a few), to degrading and hopeless slavery ; that they should sell them at auction like beasts, and treat them as our people do their slaves ; would the gospel justify their conduct ? Does any rational being believe that they could fairly justify themselves by the example of the apostolical churches ? Impossible.

If, in any case, the churches with which we hold correspondence should do or tolerate any of these evil things, we should be at no loss in regard to what the gospel would require us to do. We should consider ourselves bound to remonstrate, earnestly, against the practice of those iniquities ; and when remonstrance failed, bound to cease from all such correspondence as we had been holding with them ; and to inform them, expressly, for what cause we had felt constrained thus to withdraw. " From every brother," and of course from every church, " that walketh disorderly, *withdraw thyself*." " Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore



partakers with them." Such, beyond all doubt, is the right course to be pursued in all such cases ; especially in all cases of immorality or heresy in portions of the church lying beyond the reach of our acknowledged authority. As we are free in entering into a fraternal correspondence with them, so we are free to cease from such correspondence, for any sufficient cause. After due admonition, we must withdraw from those who practice or tolerate among them anything flagrantly contrary to the gospel, and scandalous to the Christian profession.

Slaveholding constitutes no exception to this general rule. After all which has been said or written in its defence, or for the purpose of saving from merited censure those who practice it ; after all the efforts which have been made to gain for slaveholders generally the favor which may justly be claimed by the few whose slaveholding is merely nominal, and who treat their voluntary servants as the gospel requires ; the great system still lies under the condemnation of the Christian world ; and those whose practice goes to uphold it, remain charged with flagrant immorality. The same course then should be pursued in this case as in other cases of open heresy and iniquity. The slaveholding bodies with which we are in fellowship have been admonished and entreated once and again, without success. They refuse to hear. If such admonition has been tried sufficiently, it is plainly our duty, next, *to withdraw from them* ; and to inform them that we have felt constrained to do so on account of their toleration among them of this great outrage on humanity, religion, and all righteousness.

If, after all the protestations which the Ecclesiastical Bodies of New England have uttered against slaveholding, they continue to have communion with slaveholders, and to extend to those bodies which patronize the accursed institution the right hand of fellowship by sending delegates to them and receiving delegates from them, as though no such evil existed among them, we must, by an impartial world, be considered guilty of the grossest inconsistency. If slavery is not what we have declared it to be, common honesty requires that we should, without delay, retract our declarations and make due acknowledgment of the wrong which we have done in censuring, so severely, those who practice it. But, if we believe the ground which we have taken to be true and just ; then let us maintain it, without shrinking, and wholly withdraw from those who persist in doing what, in our opinion, both the law and the gospel of God so expressly condemn. What is to be gained by deferring this decisive step any longer ? The slaveholding churches are taking no measure to deliver themselves from this iniquity ; the gospel

as preached among them is, in reference to this matter, without point or power, and can *never* effect a removal of this deadly evil; they will not allow our delegates to declare plainly, in their assemblies, the sentiments of their constituents; and it is coming to be thought almost discourteous for us in our own Associations and Conferences to declare what we believe, in the presence of their delegates. What then is to be gained by maintaining our present correspondence and fellowship?

Will it be said that we have more influence with them now than we should have if we withdraw—that to withdraw at present would at least be highly inexpedient? It is to be seriously feared that, as things now are, our testimony against slavery is at least completely neutralized, by treating slaveholders and those who tolerate them in the church, with such cordiality as we do—that our influence has been in fact more in favor of slavery than against. In this way we disgrace ourselves and injure the Southern churches, instead of doing them any real good. Doubtless we shall find in the end that no course but the straight forward course of obedience to the gospel was expedient, either for them or for us. If all professed Christians, all ministers and churches, and larger Ecclesiastical Bodies, who believe slaveholding to be wrong, to be a great sin against both God and man, would refuse to have fellowship with all such professed Christians as practice or tolerate it, their influence against it would, beyond all doubt, be far greater and more powerful than it now is. Slaveholding churches, left alone in their iniquity, cut off from all fellowship with other churches, and the Christian world, would be led to serious reflection; they would feel their position to be most undesirable; and such among them as fear God, and regard the honor of his cause, would be induced to unite their energies to deliver themselves from the disgrace and guilt which must ever be involved in the practice of this great iniquity.

But, while we withhold fellowship from churches and other Ecclesiastical Bodies which tolerate slavery, and from ministers and church members who are known to practice it, we should remember with sympathy and favor such other individuals, ministers, churches, and Ecclesiastical Bodies, as, in the same connexions, neither practice, nor willingly tolerate the evil, but are with us seeking to deliver the church and nation from it. Due discrimination in such a case ought, surely, to be made.

In the Presbyterian connexion, as we are assured by good authority, the Synods of Michigan, Ohio, Cincinnati, Indiana, Illinois, and Peoria, including twenty-seven or more Presbyteries, have taken the ground that slaveholding—not its abuses

merely—but *slaveholding*, should, by due process of discipline, be excluded from the church. A large portion of these Presbyteries have also taken action of their own, to the same effect. In addition, connected with other Synods, the same ground has been taken by the Presbyteries of Champlain, Otsego, Onondaga, Genesee, Niagara, Angelica, Montrose, Meadville, Grand River, Huron, and some others. See Rev. A. A. Phelps' Reply to Dr. Bacon. If these bodies judge that they can operate more efficiently against slaveholding by retaining their connexions, still longer, with slaveholding churches, we leave them to act in accordance with their own convictions of duty. To their own Master they stand or fall. May God enable them to stand, and prosper. We are ready, to the extent of our power, to encourage and help them. Should their endeavors to deliver the slaveholding bodies with which they are connected, from this great wickedness and scandal, prove successful, we will unite with them in praise to Him who holds the hearts of men in his hand, and without whose special blessing all efforts for the removal of this deep-rooted and deadly evil must surely prove unavailing.

But should they fail in their endeavors, and become convinced that their present position promises no better prospects of success, then it will be plainly their duty to come out, and be separate from all further connexion with slaveholding churches; and we unite on higher and better ground;—on ground sacred to truth and righteousness, to both civil and religious liberty; where slavery would no more dare to appear than it will in Heaven. May God not only make plain their path of duty and ours, but incline and help us all to do that which is right and just before him; and give us the infinite satisfaction of seeing the entire church of Christ, in this and in all lands, shining forth in the beauties of holiness; and uniting with every friend of God in praises to his name, that slaveholding can no longer be found, either in the church, or anywhere on earth.



### NOTE.

Since the foregoing pages were written, *six hundred and sixteen* ministers of the Freewill Baptist denomination have re-affirmed the noble declaration of sentiments on the subject of slavery, mentioned on page 16 as having been made by three hundred and ninety-six ministers of that connexion in 1847.









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